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ABSTRACT

A description is provided of the rationale for, objectives of, and unique and innovative features of St. Petersburg (Florida) Junior College's (SPJC's) Interdisciplinary Studies Program (IDS). First, the paper discusses the national context of renewed attention to the liberal arts, the higher education milieu in Florida, and SPJC's general education requirements. Next, information is provided on the IDS program, an instructional package which pulls the college's 36-hour requirement in humanities, history, ethics, composition, speech, American government, and natural science into a coherent, systematic, and interdisciplinary package focusing on the cultural, intellectual, and scientific heritage of Western man, and the development of students' intellectual skills of critical reading and thinking, and writing and speaking. Next, the paper discusses the innovative features of the IDS program: (1) the IDS becomes the central component of students' programs, around which they fit the specialized courses demanded by their future majors; (2) the IDS includes science in a curriculum with humanities, history, social science, and English; (3) higher-level writing and speaking skills (i.e., rhetorical principles and matters of organization and style) are incorporated into the program; (4) the IDS uses a writing-across-the-curriculum approach, tying writing and speaking assignments closely to the subject matter being dealt with in class; (5) the IDS is block-scheduled into two 4-hour blocks; (6) four-member teams are present and participating in class activities for the entire 4-hour block; and (7) students develop a sense of shared identity. Finally, the paper discusses students' responses to the IDS, and the results of an external program evaluation. Appendices include promotional information, information on major learning outcomes for each IDS course, and selected student comments on the IDS. (EJV)

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AN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES PROGRAM:

An Innovative Alternative

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Paper presented at the
National Conference on Teaching Excellence
and Conference of Administrators
Austin, Texas
May 17-20, 1987

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An Interdisciplinary Studies Program: An Innovative Alternative

A Presentation to NISOD:
National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development

Tuesday, May 19, 1987
Austin, Texas

Ben Wiley and Janet Robinson

BW: Instructors and administrators alike at our college saw the growing need to provide students with an alternative to the supermarket approach to education, and we wanted instead to develop a truly interdisciplinary teaching and learning situation. We were opposed to too much academic specialization that occurs too early in our student development. The present system of education that forces students to be "officially educated" with "x" number of units in "x" number of semesters rarely educates the whole person except in the most superficial ways. We wanted instead to redefine our concepts of higher education in the freshman-sophomore cycle and provide students not only contact with the best that western civilization has created but also to help those students learn how to learn, how to think, how to meet deadlines, how to conform to someone's else's expectations--in short, how to develop those skills one needs to get and keep a job and occasionally pay some bills, but also how to use this groundwork of basic knowledge as a springboard for further learning throughout their adult lives. We believe that SPJC's new program in Interdisciplinary Studies has provided these students with a step or multiple steps in this direction. It is still a new program, barely off the drawing board, and already we see unanswered questions (which by the way we hope to find answers to this week by listening to what other speakers have to say during their presentations). But we are convinced that our efforts to pull together our students' 36 hour requirement in humanities, history, ethics, composition, speech, American government and natural science into a coherent, systematic and

interdisciplinary package is valid and for various reasons to be discussed later, even innovative, at least in its goals, if not in its immediate execution.

Briefly, then, an outline of our presentation this morning: Janet will speak on the national context where the liberal arts seem to be receiving renewed attention and which was the essential impetus for our attempting to design such a program. Next I want to briefly comment on the higher education milieu in the state of Florida in general and at SPJC in particular, then a description of the SPJC Interdisciplinary Studies Program now going into its second year: the rationale behind such a program, its objectives, and other details or vital statistics of the program. We both then will focus on this program's innovations--what makes it unique. Finally, what has been the student response to this program and what are the challenges ahead if this program is to continue to grow as we work to prepare our students for their university experience ahead and then life beyond college.

JR: In recent years criticism of higher education has intensified and, among other complaints, focused on the concern that colleges are not delivering a coherent educational experience for students. Complaints have come from government figures, business leaders and academics themselves. As Ernest Boyer, the keynote speaker at this conference, has said, "Many of the nation's colleges and universities are more successful in credentialing than in providing a quality education for their students." Early this year the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (of which Mr. Boyer is President) published a report on the status of higher education that was based on surveys of over 10,000 students and faculty members in colleges and universities across the country. The report catalogued problems in higher education and suggested some solutions. This report is particularly valuable

because it expresses, in a fair and responsible way, the major concerns of various critics from all segments of the population.

Among the many findings and recommendations in the report, certain ones are especially relevant to our efforts at St. Petersburg Junior College to design an interdisciplinary studies program. I will mention just three concerns and one recommendation which bear on our efforts.

First, the concerns:

1. That colleges are more successful at credentialing than at providing coherent programs of study. Credentialing is the business of awarding degrees regarded as entree to desired jobs or to further schooling. A prescribed number of credits is all that is required to obtain that "piece of paper." Some colleges function as "credit banks" where degrees are awarded with no requirements of program or major.

2. That narrow vocationalism with its emphasis on skills training dominates most campuses. Such vocational training crowds out liberal arts courses with their emphasis on the whole person beyond his role as a worker. Forgotten also are those contributions that liberal arts study makes to a broader based career preparation--namely problem solving skills, judgment, a cultural frame of reference, etc.

3. The fragmentation of knowledge into competing academic disciplines with ever narrowing specialties. Students miss out on the "larger transcendent issues that give meaning to existence and help students put their lives in perspective." The assumption is that many tiny jigsaw puzzle pieces will come together in one beautiful picture, but all too often there are just too many pieces missing.

The recommendation in the report which suggests a solution to these specific failings is that of an integrated, core curriculum that "introduces

students to essential knowledge, to connections across the disciplines, and in the end, to application of knowledge to life beyond the campus." In other words, interdisciplinary studies. In an attempt to apply this recommendation, we at St. Petersburg Junior College are designing and beginning to teach our Interdisciplinary Studies Program.

BW: A.A. degree seeking students at SPJC are required to complete 64 hours of college credit which include courses in humanities, composition, social science, natural science, math, PE, a few electives. Included also are specific requirements for a speech course, a course in American government and a specially developed course for SPJC students in Applied Ethics. In other words, this is a quite commonplace and traditional framework of study where these courses are scattered over the two years. I should add also that all SPJC students are tested for placement purposes prior to enrollment, and we have an extensive remediation program for students exhibiting less than college level skills in reading, writing and computation. These students at SPJC, as is true for all students in Florida who intend to become juniors at the university, must perform satisfactorily on a state mandated exam call CLAST--College Level Academic Skills Test. This test is taken toward the conclusion of the sophomore year, the results determining whether they will be permitted to enroll in junior level courses. Also Florida college students work under a legislative requirement called the Gordon Rule, named after Senator Jack Gordon of Miami, who feared lower division college students were not writing enough, so all students are now required to write a minimum of 24,000 words in the first two years of college study.

In the face of these demands and realities, and well aware of the prevailing student and cultural mindset that seems to want only that education which is directly translatable into vocational application and salary scale and

job perks, a team of instructors set out to do that which was unimaginable if not impossible, that is to say, create 4 new courses, each worth 9 hours, that were to achieve the following 6 goals:

1) pull together the entire 36 hours general education program, minus math, PE and some electives,

2) synthesize the heretofore discrete and separate units of credit in composition, humanities, history, philosophy, ethics, government, speech and natural science into a cohesive, flowing unit,

3) reestablish the primacy of the liberal arts as the most valuable and enduring and relevant portion of the undergraduate years,

4) provide a 2-year focus on the cultural, intellectual and scientific heritage of western man,

5) develop the students' intellectual skills of critical reading and thinking and provide ample opportunities for writing and speaking skill,

and 6) satisfy the administrative demand for course equivalencies in terms of transcript credit and in terms of university transfer, particularly for those students who do not complete the entire sequence of IDS courses, choosing to return to the traditional program.

If these were our noble goals, what about the actual logistics required to achieve this integration of the general education curriculum? Many of the details of the present program are identified in the packets we have available for you at the conclusion of the presentation today. But for now let me say there are 4 semesters of IDS. An analogy I use frequently with IDS students is to consider the 4-semester IDS cycle as a clothesline. The clothesline represents the chronological world of the Greeks and Romans at one end and contemporary America and the age of space at the other end. On this clothesline of historical change and evolution, we have hung the course equivalencies

of composition or ethics or science or government. So the IDS student is constantly handling the arts and letters and ideas of succeeding ages of man and is writing and speaking about them, and for any given course he receives credit according to the established equivalencies.

All entering students at SPJC who perform at a particular level on the reading portion of the college's placement exam are invited to enroll in IDS. The cut off score is not especially high as we are not interested in developing a curriculum for only the top 5 or 10%, yet we wanted assurance (as much as placement tests can ever be assuring) that these students could most likely handle the rigorous and intensive reading and writing requirements that they would soon encounter. These are stronger students, equivalent to advance placement or honors students. Yet we have found desire to succeed in the program is as crucial a predictor of potential success as is test scores.

And remember also that we are talking about a program that is really quite small in numbers of students. Enrollment for each of the four courses is restricted to no more than 100 students. IDS is but an alternative to the general education program of the A.A. degree and is not designed to replace any established program. Nor is it designed to replace or even revolutionize the entire college offerings. SPJC, Clearwater Campus, enrolls over 5,000 day and night, full- and part-time students, so the 200 IDS students who will be enrolling each semester are but a very small fraction of the total student body.

Not only is IDS intense for the student but also for the instructor for we are preparing lectures and lessons on ways to integrate these areas of general education, plus give students adequate opportunities to write, to speak, to exhibit critical thinking skills. It's intense for the instructors also in

that this is a team taught class where 4 instructors are meshing interests, emphases, teaching styles, expectations and egoes.

Ideally a student enters IDS in the fall semester where he will study the evolution of abstract thinking and critical inquiry during the classical Greek and Roman period. He will then proceed to IDS 2 in the spring semester of his first year to study the intellectual evolution of western civilization after the fall of the classical world from the rise of the Judeo-Christian world view on to the scientific revolution generated by the Renaissance. Then on to IDS 3 in the fall of his second year which focuses on the development of the modern world and its rise of individualism, the demand for political independence and the emphasis on scientific objectivity. Finally IDS 4 in the spring of the student's second year serves as a culmination of these first 3 courses with its focus on the development of the American experience as exhibited in its government, literature, cinema and advances in space exploration and cosmological studies.

Now on to some of the innovations of this Interdisciplinary Studies Program at St. Petersburg Junior College.

JR: Although liberal arts study has been around for a long time, and even interdisciplinary studies were not invented by us at SPJC, we do feel that our program is innovative in several distinct ways. First of all, the desire of SPJC to design and implement such a program represents a reaffirmation of the importance and centrality of liberal arts in the curriculum. Our core course becomes the central component of our students' programs, around which they fit the specialized courses demanded by their future majors--and not vice versa as so often happens with the traditional program.

I should say, parenthetically, that our school is not alone in reaffirming liberal arts curriculum. Renewed attention is being paid around the country--witness the Innovation Abstract of March 13, 1987, published here by NISOD entitled "The Practicality of the Liberal Arts Major." This paper suggests that liberal arts are good job preparation. If NISOD says that the liberal arts are innovative, they must be.

But how, then, is our program innovative in specific ways? I want to mention three.

I. First, in its attempt to include science in a curriculum with humanities, history, social science, and English. Our general ed requirements include 9 hours of science, both biological and physical. In other programs in other schools, there are interdisciplinary science courses, e.g. energy management or environmental problems, but, to our knowledge, no programs which incorporate science in a total general education core course as we are attempting to do. Since our IDS course sequence has as its framework the historical development of western culture, we decided that our science emphasis should be on the history of science and the development of the scientific method. This historical approach necessitates the teaching of some discarded theories, but, in tracing the displacement of one scientific explanation by a better one, the process of scientific inquiry is demonstrated. We are also developing a laboratory skills component, a hands-on experience, which will include laboratory techniques and manipulations of equipment, e.g. mechanical operations (levers and pulleys), chemical operations (titration and distillation), a study of the metric system, etc. We hope to develop what is called "scientific literacy." "Scientific literary," according to James Trefil, Professor of Physics at the University of Virginia, is a non-technical understanding of basic scientific concepts, translated from mathematics into

English, in other words, a vocabulary. Once the philosophical bases of a particular historical period are established, scientific thought of the period naturally ties in. For instance, the subject of Galileo can be presented in several interdisciplinary ways:

1. His helio-centric description of the universe and what this has meant to astronomy up to the present century.

2. His development of an experimental method in a break with traditional Aristotelian deductive method--a connection with philosophy in an historical context.

3. His disputes with the Church and Inquisition--a socio-political emphasis.

4. His Renaissance humanism with its emphasis on human reason, again the philosophical/historical context.

Another Renaissance figure, Leonardo da Vinci, is an interdisciplinary study all by himself. In addition to his paintings, his notebooks are full of scientific studies of human anatomy and mechanical inventions of all kinds.

II. A second innovation is the incorporation of skills--composition and speech--into the program. In most interdisciplinary studies programs students are not admitted until mastery of such skills is demonstrated. IDS programs are reserved for sophomores or upper division students. Our program includes the teaching of these skills. Because students are eligible for our program based on satisfactory scores on reading and essay placement tests, we eliminate many problems with very basic writing skills and we do no classroom instruction on spelling, grammar and mechanics. When problems in these areas arise, we refer individual students to our Learning Support Center for individualized instruction in specific problem areas and for help with paper revision. In class we concentrate on higher level skills: rhetorical principles and matters of organization and style.

III. This introduces another innovation, that of writing across the curriculum. Of course we didn't invent writing across the curriculum (which was already interdisciplinary in nature and intent) but our program is the perfect setting for it. Everyone subscribes to the idea but few schools are able to implement it. At SPJC it has never been implemented because instructors outside English feel unable to judge student writing and English instructors feel inadequate to judge content of papers written for other disciplines. The papers we assign (and this is true for speech assignments) are about our course content. Another member of the team is always available for consultation if necesary, and some papers are double graded. An example of the generation of writing assignments from our course material is as following: students read the Iliad. After discussion we might assign an analysis paper on the theme of the epic, the wrath of Achilles. How does wrath (anger) function in the poem? What does it do to Achilles and others? Composition instruction includes a session on how such an analysis paper might be developed--this is called pre-writing. The topic can then be explored (in further writing assignments) in its ethical or psychological dimensions: the rightness or wrongness of anger, destructive and constructive uses of anger, righteous indignation, the physiology of anger, etc. The extension of one topic into other areas is limited only by time. At any rate, there is never a need to search for a topic or make a writing assignment such as "What I Did on My Summer Vacation." One of the greatest advantages of interdisciplinary studies is that communication skills are applied for a purpose--our students illustrate the textbook title Writing for a Purpose.

BW: And I might also add that we do try to tie the writing and speaking opportunities closely to the subject matter being dealt with in class, and I want to give you some examples of those kinds of exercises used just this last

year or planned for next:

1) a 2-student debate on whether the Elgin marbles stripped from Athens' Parthenon belong to London's British Museum or should they be returned to Greece,

2) a documented paper with accompanying student created videotape on the allusions to classical myth in contemporary rock music,

3) a study of Umberto Eco's The Name of the Rose with a focus on what this scholar has taught the reader about the Middle Ages,

4) a 5-paragraph paper on the ethical dilemmas in Machiavelli's The Prince with supporting evidence in Shakespeare's Richard 3, Hamlet and Macbeth,

5) an investigation of the crystalline qualities of marble that makes it such an ideal medium of artistic expression as in Bernini's marble sculpture,

6) an extensive documented paper parallelling the French, American and Russian revolutions,

7) a paper and oral presentation on the Freudian incest imagery derived from the Greeks,

or 8) a report with accompanying videotape of students' investigation of Aristophanes' Lysistrata and its varying translations over the centuries. By the way, as a reminder, Lysistrata is that ancient play that deals with women bonding together in a boycott of sex with their husbands and lovers until these men declare a moratorium on war. This project gave us an opportunity to tie in the anthropological views of acceptable sex and appropriate gender roles, of studies in semantics and acceptable language and the ethical dilemmas of censorship. Interestingly enough, the very week Lysistrata was our reading assignment, various Florida high schools had banned this play from their school libraries. This was a project undertaken to determine what images, what allusions, what slang was acceptable to various generations of readers and

translators. The three students who worked on this project went so far to create a contemporary translation of their own where their dialogue and references were certainly apropos for the uninhibited and unembarassed 80's.

Other innovations I want to consider now are the block scheduling IDS affords us, the team-centered instruction and the student group's sense of shared identity.

IDS 1 will meet on Monday and Wednesday, two days a week, from 8 till 12. This entire block of four hours, twice a week, is ours to schedule as we see fit. At the beginning of each class an agenda is placed on the blackboard so the student will be clear as to the sequence of activities and events scheduled for that day. We are not restricted to the scheduling demands of other classes on campus; thus, we can make lectures as long or short as necessary for our purposes, can provide breaks when we deem them appropriate, can cancel a class and reconvene elsewhere, can move from large group delivery into small group interaction, can schedule morning half-day field trips without causing other work or school scheduling conflicts for the students, and can more easily integrate a lecture-discussion-demonstration approach. In other words, access to the two 4-hour block remains one of the program's most obvious benefits and most innovative use of time. Fridays are then available not only for lengthy team interaction but also for follow-up work with individual students who need that extra push or who were absent on Monday or Wednesday.

Directly related to this flexibility of time inherent on the IDS program is another innovative element, that at first glance may not appear so new, and that's the use of the four-member team. For that block of time all four instructors are present and participating in some way in class activities. Certainly each instructor has assigned responsibilities and duties, and well ahead of that class, all events of the day are very carefully planned and

orchestrated. One instructor may be assigned the major responsibility of preparing the lecture, say on the contributions of the Arab world to the science of the European middle ages, and this instructor has in turn taught this material in a Friday session to the other three instructors. Then on the day of delivery to the class, this instructor provides the major thrust of the material to the students, but we may all four then provide a follow up hour of four small group interactions where each instructor reinforces points introduced in the previous lecture. For example the large group may hear a lecture on John Milton's epic style and Christian theology in light of the counter Reformation, then have a follow up hour of small group discussion where the four instructors will lead their groups through a close investigation of individual lines from Paradise Lost. Or a large group of 100 students will work on the Renaissance artist's familiarity with anatomy, then adjourn to four small groups for a close investigation of DaVinci's use of anatomy in his art and scientific drawings and inventions. Or perhaps one instructor will deliver an hour lecture to the entire group on Galileo's contributions to the development of scientific inquiry, and the following hour, four groups of students will individually be subject to an intense seminar-like grilling of a Galileo-related reading assignment.

Though all this appears completely planned, that doesn't mean there is never the opportunity for impulsive comments from the other instructors, comments which amplify or clarify material in a meaningful way for the students. And it is good for students to see the intellectual exchange of ideas between and among their instructors.

Finally there is one last innovation in IDS that seems to set it apart from the traditional classroom approach we're most familiar with. When these students are thrown together for these significant chunks of time over the four

semesters, they soon develop close bonding with one another. Particularly by being grouped with peers of similar academic abilities, they form quickly a community of their own in the midst of a large and potentially anonymous campus population. SPJC is a commuter, non-residential two-year college notorious for its inability to sustain student interest and presence beyond class time. IDS has thus given these students a focus that is both social and academic. After all, at least with each other, they don't have to explain what IDS is. It's this query which apparently the IDS student hears the most from his friends. And it's not always easy to answer. There seems to be a genuine camaraderie of concern and support that develops within this community, an espirit de corps, if you will, that grows with each passing semester. In fact, part of our recruitment approach reinforces and capitalizes on the "Small College Within a Large College" identity. Extra curricular activities such as a trip to the Ramses II exhibition in Jacksonville, FL, or trips to Epcot further the development of a social sense within an academic context.

And what do the students think of the program?

JR: The packet which we will distribute includes a list of specific student responses taken from evaluations.

In general, the response of our students to the program has been overwhelmingly positive. This may, of course, be due, in part, to the Hawthorne effect. That is, the program appeals because it is experimental and students are caught up in the excitement. Our enthusiasm, and sometimes anxiety, is communicated to them. However, we have lost some students, both during the semester and between IDS 1 and IDS 2. For the most part, those who fade away do not give their reasons. Those who have given reasons other than personal ones, such as change of job hours, have said flatly that they can get higher

grades with less work in the traditional program. This is a perception which may or may not be true.

Our two methods of obtaining student opinion are course evaluations and the visit of a consultant who held interviews with students selected from across the range of grades earned in IDS 2.

Our student evaluation of the course is an anonymous, essay answer evaluation where the questions are pointed and specific, directed at specific activities and assignments. We ask questions about our procedures, such as number and kind of exams and papers. We ask why students are deciding to continue or not continue in the program. Some students may fear that we can recognize handwriting (which is mostly not the case) and therefore are cautious in their comments, but most are frank and critical where they feel the need. Positive responses stress the intellectual excitement and challenge of the material, the enthusiasm of the instructors, the esprit de corps and relationships among class members developed in group projects and on field trips, and the integration of skills with content. Negative comments have been related to specific tests, readings and audio-visual materials, as well as the general complaint that there is just too much work.

I think that one factor which contributes to positive feeling (and one which students may not be completely aware of) is the security of belonging to a group, and that the group, having been specially selected, is a kind of elite. Students have always complained about hard work; it is a kind of reverse brag.

At the suggestion of our administration, we invited a specialist in the field of Interdisciplinary Studies to evaluate our program and make recommendations. Our consultant was Dr. Robert Detweiler, Director of Graduate Studies in the Institute of Liberal Arts at Emory University in Atlanta. He held hour

long interviews with students selected from all grade levels of our class. Their frank comments were helpful to him in evaluating strengths and weaknesses of our program. Some of his comments to us are as follows:

1. He was impressed--the word he used was "moved"--by the enthusiasm of our students for the program.

2. Some of the students worried that their transcripts would have a "fair to middling" appearance--neither very high or low grades--because their strengths are muted by their weaknesses.

3. They all felt that relationships developed among class members and between students and instructors were very valuable, especially for students who continue in the program.

4. They felt that the course work is very difficult and a problem for those without self-discipline and commitment--a failing of many recent high school graduates.

As glowing a report as this is overall, there are serious concerns as we continue to develop this program.

BW: Though this program has had a successful beginning, it has not been without its difficulties and headaches, and there are a number of challenges that remain. Let me mention a few of them:

1) Recruitment--Word of mouth is yet insufficient and until the program becomes better known through this JC student population and the local high school population, we are dependent on a lot of phone calls, letter writing and high school visitation. A recruitment packet goes out to each student who performs at the entrance level on the placement exam. So over the summer we may send out near 1,000 letters just to recruit for a 100-member class. We're convinced as we become better established and more widely known and more obviously proven, students will initially come to us rather than as is now the

case our having to go to them.

2) Retention--This is a difficult class which by itself causes attrition. Some students have admitted to us that they could get better grades elsewhere within the college and with much less work. Other students simply find the pressure too great or the work load too heavy. Other students become afraid of a 9-hour course; indeed, putting all 9 eggs in the grade point basket is threatening. And then there are other students who have been brainwashed into believing that the only preparation for life is the preparation that immediately translates into vocational skills.

3) The vocational school mentality is another challenge ahead as we confront a general campuswide tendency among students and staff alike to believe the only good education is education that leads directly to a job. We are confronted by the reality of a society that only gives passing nods to the liberal arts while, in fact, worshipping at the education altar of marketing, computers, and allied health.

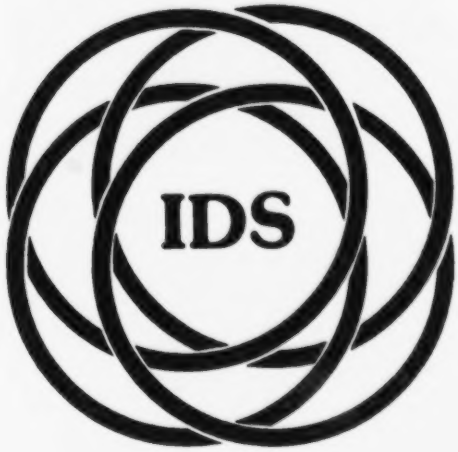
4) Finally we are challenged by such difficulties as Florida's dual enrollment programs where the brightest students can take college credit courses while they're still in high school. Thus, once they're here at JC they already have credit in the IDS equivalencies, so they do not want to spend time in repeating course credit. Also we're finding that so many pre-professional degree programs have spelled out in minute detail the courses students must take, thus eliminating any electives that college students should be able to experiment with. And we are still struggling with the problem of course equivalencies for the transcript. There must be a way to certify that any given semester of IDS has provided the student appropriate academic experiences, but it is impossible to equate one-on-one IDS courses with the traditional offerings. Only in the broadest sense can we achieve this same course content.

For example, in IDS 2, which equates on the transcript to Ethics, Speech and Natural Science, the students are receiving instruction in composition also and are dealing with the art, literature and history of the Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation. Indeed, as some students have been quick to point out to us, IDS 2 is like 5 courses, not just 3.

In conclusion, there are two goals of IDS, knowledge and intellectual development, and it's these we've tried to carefully weave into this two-year program. The knowledge students gain will be knowledge of cultural, intellectual and scientific heritage of Western man. At the same time they are tracing this intellectual history, they will also be sharpening and strengthening their own intellectual skills. Mastery of these skills is the mark of the educated person. College professors expect such mastery in their junior and senior students; likewise the business world looks for it in their employees. We are convinced that the Interdisciplinary Studies Program at St. Petersburg Junior College provides the avenue for our students to develop and refine these skills.

INTER-DISCIPLINARY STUDIES...

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS



St. Petersburg Junior College
Clearwater Campus

Q

A

What is Interdisciplinary Studies?

Interdisciplinary Studies is a structured and integrated curriculum at St. Petersburg Junior College which fulfills 36 hours of Florida's general education requirements.

These requirements include liberal arts courses in English, the humanities and the social and natural sciences.

Q

A

How do the goals of IDS relate to my personal goals?

Making a living requires more than specialized technical training. Employees whose careers progress beyond entry-level positions succeed because they have the high level skills that a liberal arts curriculum develops, such as analytical, interpersonal, organizational, and communication skills. They can understand and interpret complex relationships, gather and sort new information, anticipate and adapt to rapid and frequent change.

Making a life in a diverse and ever-changing society requires many decisions. The liberal arts help us to understand ourselves, our society and culture past and present, and the natural world of which we are a part. Better choices are made by people who know themselves and their world.

Q

A

Why should I take Interdisciplinary Studies?

Through Interdisciplinary Studies the questions, issues and themes which have preoccupied our great thinkers, artists, and scientists can be examined for implications across academic disciplines, avoiding both the overlapping of content and the omission of significant material. Relationships between ideas are more readily apparent. Also, students and instructors in the program working together for an extended period of time will be more likely to form a cohesive and harmonious unit.

Students can best prepare for a career when they encounter a curriculum which provides them with a general understanding of content while encouraging their intellectual curiosity. The fields of study that develop such habits of mind are traditionally believed to be literature, history, philosophy and the social sciences. These areas plus an investigation of the history of scientific thought and method are the integrated content of IDS.

Q

Will the liberal arts background of the Interdisciplinary Studies Program help prepare me for a business or professional career?

A

The business world is a "marketplace of ideas" where liberal arts

majors have the analytical and interpersonal skills necessary to succeed even though they did not major in business or marketing. These skills include command of the spoken and written language, sense of self-worth and self-confidence, ability to put oneself in another's viewpoint and appreciation of the artistic and poetic. Furthermore, a liberal arts background provides training that a purely technical approach does not. For instance, judgment, historical perspective, knowledge of other cultures, ethical sensitivity, intellectual flexibility, and a capacity for interpretive/creative thinking all are areas of focus for the liberal arts Interdisciplinary Studies Program.

Q

A

What are the benefits of the Interdisciplinary Studies Program?

- flexible scheduling
- a low student-teacher ratio
- peers of similar abilities and motivation
- an excellent opportunity to acquire the skills you'll need in your junior and senior years at the university
- the opportunity to work closely with enthusiastic teachers who are interested in your intellectual development
- an understanding of how different subjects inter-relate
- a chance to study subjects from a broad perspective

Q

A

How do I know if this program is right for me?

Do you like to learn? Do you enjoy a challenge? Are you willing to involve yourself in intensive study, reading and discussion? Are you a highly motivated student? If you answer "yes" to these questions and if you enjoy being with others who like a challenging intellectual atmosphere, the Interdisciplinary Studies Program may be right for you.

Q

A

How do I enroll in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program?

In order to enroll in the program, you must first see an SPJC counselor, who will help you determine whether you qualify for the program based on your scores on the SPJC entrance-placement exam. Enrollment is limited in order to maintain a low student-teacher ratio.

Q

A

What courses will I take?

Interdisciplinary Studies courses are those *liberal arts* courses required of all students in colleges and universities. These courses, which provide a foundation for further specialized study and professional preparation, include:

- English
- Humanities
- Social Science
- Natural Science
- Mathematics

Q **How does this program differ from the traditional course of study?**

A

Traditional	
English	6 hrs.
Speech	3 hrs.
Humanities	6 hrs.
Ethics	3 hrs.
American Gov't.	3 hrs.
Social Science	3 hrs.
Math	6 hrs.
Science	9 hrs.
Electives	23 hrs.
P.E.	2 hrs.
A.A. Degree	64 hrs.

Interdisciplinary Studies	
IDS 1101	9 hrs.
IDS 1102	9 hrs.
IDS 2103	9 hrs.
IDS 2104	9 hrs.
Math	6 hrs.
Electives	20 hrs.
P.E.	2 hrs.
A.A. Degree	64 hrs.

Q **How do the IDS courses compare to the traditional courses of study?**

A

IDS 1101 Composition I, Humanities, Social Science (9 credit hours)

IDS 1102 Speech, Natural Science, Ethics (9 credit hours)

IDS 2103 Composition II, Humanities, Natural Science (9 credit hours)

IDS 2104 American National Government, Natural Science, American Studies (9 credit hours)

Each semester of IDS is a 9 credit hour course. You can plan all your other course work or part-time job around the IDS block. The IDS courses are offered in the daytime and only in Sessions I and II, not in the summer nor in the evening.

Q **Can I enroll in the program after the first semester?**

A

Yes. Successful completion of ENC 1101 is the prerequisite for your enrollment in both IDS 1102 and IDS 2103. No first-time IDS student will be enrolled in IDS 2104.

Note to parents:

The instructors with whom your son or daughter will be working in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program are experienced educators dedicated to challenging students and to helping them learn. They are keenly aware of the skills students will need when they transfer to another college to complete a bachelor's degree. Since each learning activity in the program is designed to build skills and a firm educational foundation, students who complete this program can be expected to do extremely well in the remainder of their college careers. Additional emphasis is also placed on building self-confidence and in learning skills which help them achieve success in their chosen careers.

For more information, call:
Joe Fenley (813) 791-2685
Helen V. McLean (813) 791-2609
Charles Mott (813)791-2537
Janet Robinson (813) 791-2693
Ben Wiley (813) 791-2694
Or write:
Interdisciplinary Studies Program
St. Petersburg Junior College
Clearwater Campus
P.O. Box 13489
St. Petersburg, FL 33733

St. Petersburg Junior College
Clearwater Campus

St. Petersburg Junior College is dedicated to the concept of equal opportunity. The College will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, or marital status, or against any qualified handicapped individual, in its employment practices or in the admission and treatment of students.

Recognizing that sexual harassment constitutes discrimination on the basis of sex and violates this rule, the College shall not tolerate such conduct.

MAJOR LEARNING OUTCOMES

Interdisciplinary Studies 1101
Interdisciplinary Studies 1102
Interdisciplinary Studies 2103
Interdisciplinary Studies 2104

Major Learning Outcomes for each of the four courses in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program have been approved by St. Petersburg Junior College's Curriculum and Instruction Committee and the St. Petersburg Junior College District Board of Trustees. Approved also are accompanying objectives for each of these Major Learning Outcomes.

As the program planning proceeds and each course is actually classroom-experienced, as opposed merely to being plans on paper, these objectives are rewritten, refined, shifted from one course to another, or eliminated. The IDS team's purpose is to arrive at a coherent sequence of learning outcomes and objectives that best reflects the program's overall objective: a chronological development of Western Civilization that provides students with significant learning experiences in the liberal arts and sciences.

St. Petersburg Junior College
Interdisciplinary Studies Program

Interdisciplinary Studies 1101--MAJOR LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. The student will demonstrate acquired study skills appropriate for success in this interdisciplinary approach.

2. The student will demonstrate he/she can evaluate literature critically.

3. The student will demonstrate he/she has acquired appropriate composition skills.

4. The student will demonstrate acquired knowledge about and improved facility with logic and argument.

5. The student will demonstrate that he/she can evaluate philosophically, historically, artistically and economically the Golden Age of Athens.

6. The student will demonstrate that he/she can analyze, synthesize and evaluate the contributions of Greek drama to the society of its time and to subsequent Western drama.

7. The student will demonstrate that he/she can evaluate the decline of Athens.

8. The student will demonstrate that he/she can analyze, synthesize and evaluate the contributions of Greek and Roman philosophers to their time and to Western culture.

9. The student will demonstrate that he/she can analyze, synthesize and evaluate the contributions of the Roman Empire to Western culture.

10. The student will demonstrate that he/she can analyze, synthesize and evaluate the mythic dimension of the classical world.

11. The student will demonstrate that he/she values the contributions of classical Greek and Roman civilizations to Western culture.

St. Petersburg Junior College
Interdisciplinary Studies Program

Interdisciplinary Studies 1102 -- MAJOR LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. The student will demonstrate increasing competence in the preparation and organization of various oral presentations.

2. The student will demonstrate increasing competence in speech delivery skills.

3. The student will demonstrate effective listening skills.

4. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the development of the English language.

5. The student will demonstrate mastery of the composition skills requisite for scholarly work.

6. The student will demonstrate mastery of the oral communication skills requisite for scholarly work.

7. The student will identify and evaluate the significance of the major historical, scientific and intellectual developments of the Middle Ages.

8. The student will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the interrelatedness of the major historical, scientific and intellectual developments of the Middle Ages.

9. The student will identify and evaluate the significance of the major historical, scientific and intellectual developments of the Renaissance and Reformation.

10. The student will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the interrelatedness of the major historical, scientific and intellectual developments of the Renaissance and Reformation.

11. The student will consider the process of biological adaptation in both a biological and a geological context.

12. The student will present evidence of man's migration around the globe.

13. The student will describe the relationship of alchemy, metallurgy and the other chemistries to the conflict between tradition and originality in scientific thinking.

14. The student will explain the role of the astronomical sciences in the evolution of the scientific method.

15. The student will understand how Newton's ideas formed the basis for later scientific progress.

St. Petersburg Junior College
Interdisciplinary Studies Program

Interdisciplinary Studies 2103 -- **MAJOR LEARNING OUTCOMES**

1. The student will identify and evaluate the significance of the major historical, scientific and intellectual developments of Europe in the Modern Era.

2. The student will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the interrelatedness of the major historical, scientific and intellectual developments of Europe in the Modern Era.

3. The student will demonstrate mastery of the composition skills requisite for scholarly work.

4. The student will demonstrate ability to comprehend and interpret selected literary works.

5. The student will demonstrate ability to use the library effectively for scholarly work.

6. The student will describe the work of Darwin and Wallace and discuss the implications for the modern biological sciences.

7. The student will understand the basis of modern chemistry.

8. The student will outline the history of investigation and theorization of sub-atomic particles and the structure of the atom.

9. The student will show how Mendel's work paved the way for the discovery of the DNA molecule and led to the modern science of genetics.

10. The student will describe the role of science in the mind of man.

St. Petersburg Junior College
Interdisciplinary Studies Program

Interdisciplinary Studies 2104 -- **MAJOR LEARNING OUTCOMES**

1. The student will identify and evaluate the significance of the major social historical, literary, scientific, technological, and intellectual developments of American culture.

2. The student will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the interrelatedness of the major social, historical, literary, scientific, technological, and intellectual developments of American culture.

3. The student will demonstrate an understanding of that phenomenon known as "modern art," especially its European origins and its present expression in America.

4. The student will demonstrate an awareness of the impact of film, particularly the documentary, on the development and expression of American society.

5. The student will identify the basic backgrounds that led to the adoption of the principles of American government.

6. The student will identify the fundamental principles of the constitution and the ways they were implemented.

7. The student will identify and evaluate the organization and function of the three branches of the federal government.

8. The student will learn the scope of the civil liberties as contained in the Bill of Rights.

9. The student will be familiar with the status and difficulties of American foreign policy and national security.

10. The student will explain ancient astronomical knowledge as evidenced by man-made structures in Britain and North America.

11. The student will present information that is available on each of the planets of our solar system.

12. The student will outline the history of man in space and describe consequent technologies.

13. The student will tell what is meant by genetic engineering, describe the methods by which it is achieved, and comment on the ethical considerations of the process.

14. The student will compare the positive and negative aspects of in vitro fertilization and surrogate parenthood.

15. The student will describe the modern theory of plate tectonics, and show how its mechanism can account for most continental and ocean bottom landscapes, as well as the formation of the oceans and the atmosphere.

16. The student will outline the chemical composition of the earth's atmosphere, and describe the mechanisms and consequences of the buildup of carbon dioxide and fluorochlorocarbons and acid rain.

17. The student will explain the relationship of world political and economic systems on the availability of fossil fuels, and make short and long range predictions of conditions as these resources decline.

Interdisciplinary Studies Program
St. Petersburg Junior College

COMMENTS FROM IDS STUDENTS

I think that I've learned a lot more in IDS than I would have had taken the classes separately. The class content is interesting and I think taking field trips and seeing films has helped us to learn more. It's a fast paced class and it takes a lot of work and studying. The fact that we have such a huge class doesn't take anything away from the discussions. If there is something that needs more work, the group is divided to make it easier. I would encourage everyone to take IDS. It's worth all of the effort.

--Brenda Constantine, Dixie Hollins H.S.

I sit next to a perfect IDS student. She lives to study and brakes for libraries. She is vivacious and happy and loves every minute of class. I am not like that. I wait for things to excite me like Rome and the Crusades and Alexander the Great and Shakespeare but the boring stuff is there too - a good student I'm not. But it would help a prospective recruit to be open and liberal and to possess good study habits.

--Adam C. Smith, Tarpon Springs H.S.

To anyone interested in taking a class which provides a challenge and requires a lot of hard work, yet at the same time is a lot of fun, IDS is the class to take. The class itself consists of lectures, films, lots of reading, papers, objective and essay tests, and even field trips. In this class I really feel like I am learning. I know that whatever I end up doing as a career, all that I've learned in IDS will help me.

--Bernadette Leyden, Clearwater H.S.

The IDS program is set up so that in continuing the program for the four semesters, a student is taken on a tour through the history of Western man which eventually leads to present time. The interelated areas of art, architecture, literature, science, and ideas of the classical period now form a vivid picture in my mind. I have come to realize the important role this period of history played in forming many of the ideas we have today.

Through my studies in IDS many of my basic skills such as reading and writing have been enhanced. The teaching staff is extremely qualified and they make a genuine effort to keep the program both interesting and informative. If asked to sum up my feelings about IDS program, I would have to say "I wouldn't miss it for the world!"

--Donald J. Mason, Fort Hill H.S.
Cumberland, MD

Each teacher has something unique to offer or add to the material we study. The class format is well-structured and organized, so that each student can plan his/her schedule accordingly with no surprises. The field trips are exciting as well as insightful. This class can really help students who come from a background of honors and Advanced Placement Programs stay on the serious and scholarly track!

--Heather C. Krantz, Tarpon Springs H.S.

I have really enjoyed IDS these past two semesters because it is unlike any other course that I have ever taken. It has a unique way of combining all Liberal Art concepts together to make a well-defined and interesting class. For example, when the works and life of Homer are being studied, the history, science, philosophy, developments in architecture, music, theology, and politics of that era are also studied. These various subjects are taught not only by lectures but also with interesting films, music cassettes, sculpture presentations, fantastic books, and very intriguing field trips. I believe the best part of IDS is that although it seems like one class at first, the wealth of information presented proves that it is all Liberal Art courses combined in one, very interesting course.

--Margie K. Weber, Dunedin H.S.

When I joined IDS, I felt it would be an ideal liberal arts background for my career goal. It has provided me with opportunities to read great literature, study ethics, learn of man's art, his scientific history and advances and much more. IDS allows one to get a "sampling" of various studies and encourages an appreciation of man's achievements throughout history.

--Ann Marie Bowser, Tarpon Springs H.S.

It would be difficult to put into mere words the enjoyment and pain I have incurred in this class. It has been overhelming at times. The class is incredible. The mind had to work overtime to keep up at times. To put it simply the rewards have been tremendous due to the excellence of the material studied and the complete devotion of the teachers to impart knowledge into willing minds. I look forward eagerly to IDS III in the fall semester, and IDS IV next Spring.

--Betty A. Merica, Baltimore, MD
Eastern H.S.

IDS has become a way to learn for me. I can't imagine taking separate courses after being exposed to this program. IDS fits the individual subjects together so they become integral and impossible to study without one another.

--Michelle Bordeaux,
Clearwater Central Catholic H.S.

I enjoy the class, the instructors, and the students. It is nice to find people with approximately the same academic standing as myself. I also feel that the bonds formed between IDS students and instructor are priceless -- IDS affiliates experience a closeness not available in the general program.

--Chris Toscidis, Dunedin H.S.

Students, instructors praise SPJC program

The first semester of the Interdisciplinary Studies class initiated in August on the Clearwater campus of St. Petersburg Junior College ended this week with about 50 of the 58 original students.

As the students finished their final papers and made plans for next semester, the instructors of the class, Janet Robinson and Ben Wiley, evaluated the students' work and refined plans for the second semester of the program.

The Interdisciplinary Studies program combines three separate classes into one that meets for two sessions of four hours each week. For instance, English composition was combined with humanities and social science in the first semester.

The students' writing assignments often related to the material covered in the humanities or social science portions of the class.

The second semester will cover speech, ethics and natural science, and the subjects will change again in the third and fourth semesters.

Other instructors will join the program as it expands, Robinson and Wiley said.

The instructors describe it as ". . . a small college within a big one . . . with increased teacher-pupil contact . . . with emphasis on the intellectual, cultural and scientific heritage of Western man."

Jenny Boyer, a 1986 graduate of Clearwater High School, now finishing her first semester at the college, describes the program as ". . . a very different approach. Instead of doing a composition on 'nothing,' we write about what we're learning. That's what I like about it." Boyer attends college on an academic scholarship. She plans to continue in the program.

YOUNG NEWSMAKERS

PAT SCARBERRY

Jenny Boyer is finishing her first year at the college and plans to continue in the program.

David Holan, also a graduate of Clearwater High, described the program as "fantastic, a good experience for any business you're going to go into." However, Holan said, "It is so intense that if you are not interested in English, it's not for you. It's an honors program. If you survive it, you know you can write a paper."

David Holan calls the program "a good experience for any business you're going to go into."

When asked what he didn't like about it, **James Drizd,** a student from Maryland County, Md., said after some hesitation, "The length — four hours is a long time to maintain concentration even with the breaks."

In its favor he added: "A liberal arts education is needed today and it's a pretty good class if you're really trying to get a good education. I think the world is getting a little too specialized, if you ask me."

Jim Minewiser's parents encouraged him to take the class. Minewiser, who graduated from Countryside High, said he thought he needed more specialized training. He's changed his mind. After a few classes, he said he became ". . . very excited about it." He, too, plans to continue.

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